

New web site helps locate elderly and disability services

The North Dakota Department of Human Services has launched a new website, www.carechoice.nd.gov, to help people locate services for older adults and adults with disabilities. Called the Aging and Disability Resource-LINK, it replaces the state's Senior Info-Line website and includes additional information such as food pantries, community services and transportation resources. The website's database is updated regularly. Individuals can search by service type or provider name and can also search for services within a county or a specified driving distance of a ZIP code.

"People are usually not familiar with existing services and community resources that can help them stay in their homes, and that leaves a knowledge gap when a

health crisis or significant change in ability occurs," said Aging Services Division Director Linda Wright. "This free and confidential service features a database of services that can help people maintain their independence or meet their changing needs."

Individuals who do not have internet access or who prefer to receive information by phone can access the Aging and Disability Resource-LINK by calling the nationwide toll-free number at 1-800-451-8693.

A certified resource and referral specialist employed by the department answers calls 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday central time.

During evening or weekends, callers can leave a

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Adam W. Hamm
Insurance Commissioner

Welcome to the *RxConnector* newsletter!

Dear friends,

This newsletter is designed to keep you up-to-date about the Prescription Connection for North Dakota program and to keep you in the know about the various prescription assistance programs that are available.

From time to time, we may also include other items of interest related to Medicare and the Senior Health Insurance Counseling (SHIC) program.

As always, thank you so much for all that you do for the Prescription Connection program. Without your help, our work would be that much harder. Your efforts are valued and appreciated.

If you have items of interest that you think should be included in this newsletter, we would love to hear about them. Please contact Sharon St. Aubin at ssaubin@nd.gov or call her at 1.888.575.6611.

Adam W. Hamm
Insurance Commissioner

**NORTH
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a program of the
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**Prescription
Connection**
for North Dakota

RxConnector is a publication of the Prescription Connection for North Dakota program.

Contact us at:

1.888.575.6611
insurance@nd.gov
www.nd.gov/ndins

message. Calls will be returned on the next business day. Individuals can also contact the resource link by

email at carechoice@nd.gov.

Disability etiquette tips

The North Dakota Disability Health Project at Minot State University provides a helpful disability etiquette tips guide.

The tips include:

- Be age appropriate (treat adults like adults).
- Be patient. Some people with disabilities may need extra time to express themselves or to move around.
- Speak directly to the person and



maintain eye contact. Don't speak to the companion/aide or interpreter.

- Use people first language, such as people with disabilities and avoid words like handicapped, disabled, afflicted or crippled.
- Help make your community accessible. Become familiar with accessibility standards.

- Help monitor proper use of accessible parking spaces.
- Offer assistance, then wait and listen for specific directions.
- Do not pet, feed or distract service animals without permission. They are working animals.

To obtain copies of the guide, contact the ND Disability Health Project at 1-800-233-1737 or visit their website at www.ndcpd.org/health.

United States National Library of Medicine

The Drug Information Portal at <http://druginfo.nlm.nih.gov> is a free web resource from the national Library of Medicine (NLM) that provides an informative, user-friendly portal to current drug information for over 15,000 drugs. Links to sources span the breadth of NLM, the National Institutes of Health

(NIH) and other government agencies. Current information regarding consumer health, clinical trials, AIDS-related drug information, MeSH pharmacological actions, PubMed biomedical literature and physical properties and structure is easily retrieved by searching on a drug name. A varied selection of

focused topics in medicine and drug-related

information is also available from displayed subject headings.



Kids Count North Dakota

2008 Issue Guides provide a profile of children's well-being for each of North Dakota's 47 Legislative Districts, as well as the state, in preparation for the 2008 election year. The guides were released March 2008. [See More](#)

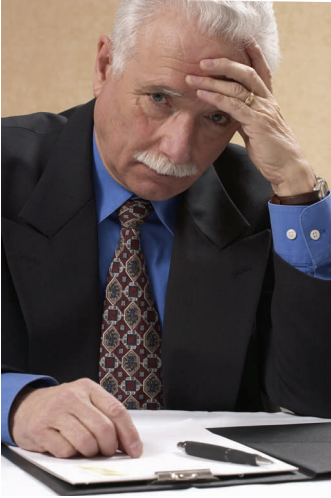
Inform Fact Sheets summarize important trends and are published bimonthly. "Family Permanence " was released February 2008. [See More](#)

Drug information portal

The Drug Information Portal at www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginformation.html is a free web resource from the National Library of

Medicine (NLM) that provides an informative, user-friendly portal to current drug information for over 15,000 drugs.

They won't let me retire



A labor shortage is looming. Companies are hiring older workers, but updated skills are essential. An alarming national brain drain—millions of unfilled jobs by 2010—is gradually easing the hiring market for older workers in general. If you have the right skills, or are willing to retrain, you may never had to retire until you're ready.

“Employers are smart. They’re always looking around for the next untapped labor market,” says Marci Pitt-Catsouphe, co-director of Boston’s College’s Center on Aging & Work. “These days it’s older workers.”

Despite the current uncertainty of the economy, a wave of retirements threatens both the public and private sectors. In the next five years, the federal government could lose more than one-third of its permanent full-time workforce.

In the private sector, health care, financial services, technology, social assistance, education, public utilities and engineering already report workplace shortages. So do trades such as carpentry, electrical work and plumbing.

Patrick Rafter, vice president of RetirementJobs.com, a Waltham, Mass., career website, adds more to the list: temporary professionals and administrative workers.

“Those jobs are well suited for seasoned workers who want a flexible schedule,” he adds. CVS even offers a “snowbird” option to more than 1,000 workers who shift between jobs in the North and the South.

Linda Wiener, a workforce consultant, says employers increasingly are seeking “soft skills”—computers initially screen electronic resumes for keywords like “communication skills” and “customer service.” Mature workers are valued, she says, because they “can speak and write clearly, use good grammar—abilities younger workers may lack.”

Eight states—Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Maine, New Mexico, Ohio and Wyoming—are working with the National Governors Association to come up with ways to retain or lure back older workers.

In 2006, 29 percent of people in their late 60s were working, compared with 18.4 percent in 1985.

Source: Elizabeth Pope
AARP Bulletin
March 2008

Health information: virtually!

Health Information: Virtually! is an information sheet of the Harley E. French Library of the Health Sciences at University of North Dakota. This sheet lists about 20

sources for medical information. Medline Plus is one of those sources. This site is an authoritative and up-to-date health and drug information resource.

To obtain a copy of this information sheet go to <http://undmedlibrary.org> or call 701-777-3994.

Uncle Sam wants YOU!

The federal government—the national’s largest employer—is seeking 50-plus workers to solve a potential brain drain. For the first time, three U.S. agencies have joined AARP’s National

Employer Team of 37 employers interested in older workers. The Internal Revenue Service, the Peace Corps and the Small Business Administration Office of Disaster Assistance have full- and

part-time slots to fill, both inside and outside Washington.

Source: AARP Bulletin
March 2008

Call 2-1-1

211 is a free and confidential telephone service you can use to get connected with human services and community resources in your area, regardless of where you live.

211 Community Education Coordinator Chet Pulver says that since its August 2004 inception, the service hasn't been used as widely as he would like. "It's one of the best-kept secrets in North Dakota," Pulver says. "The number provides a single point of contact for community services and is efficient, fast and easy to remember." North Dakota is one of 17 states that provide statewide coverage. The service is available

24 hours a day, seven days a week.

People in North Dakota with landlines can dial 211. North Dakota Verizon Wireless customers wanting to use the service should call 800-472-2911. 211 is also available online at www.211nd.org.

Source: HEALTHYchoices
First/Second Quarters 2008



New application for Rx outreach

In March 2008, Rx Outreach updated the application for affordable medications. This new application is not on NeedyMeds (04-10-08). The new application does not ask for the address of the doctor. It also does

not have a box to use to calculate the amount of money to send to pay for the medications. The medications available are listed in a different format. There is a survey at the end of each application.

Caring for children

Caring for Children serves families who do not qualify for government funded programs yet cannot afford to purchase private health insurance. The program provides free primary and preventive medical, dental and mental health services for eligible children from birth to age 19. Coverage includes office visits and routine physicals, diagnostic tests, well-child care, immunizations, preventive dental services, limited inpatient and surgical services, and mental health and chemical dependency care. If you know a family with uninsured children, visit

www.ndcaring.org to find out how to apply for the Caring for Children program.

Linda Faul would be happy to speak to your service club, church group or other civic organization about the program. You can contact Faul at 701-282-1102 or lisa.faul@bcbsnd.com

Source: HEALTHYchoices
A Journal Dedicated to Your Good Health
First/Second Quarters 2008

Hospitals increasingly reviewing patients' personal financial info

A growing number of U.S. hospitals are accessing patients' personal financial information to help determine how likely patients are to pay their medical bills, the *Wall Street Journal* reports. According to the *Journal*, some hospitals look at patients' credit reports—which provide information on available lines of credit, debt and payment histories—while other hospitals employ third-party services that predict patients' ability to pay based on factors such as income.

Hospitals typically use such services for uninsured

patients and insured patients with high out-of-pocket costs. Officials say checking patients' financial information allows hospitals to determine more quickly which patients to pursue for payment because they can afford it, as well as which patients are eligible for charity care or assistance programs. Some firms—such as the credit bureau [Equifax](http://www.equifax.com) and SearchAmerican, which mines credit bureau data—have begun offering health care credit scores to provide more reliable information about a patient's likelihood of payment.

Source: Kaiser Daily Health Policy Report, March 18, 2008

Economic downturn has led seniors to delay retirement

The *Wall Street Journal* recently examined how falling real estate and stock markets have led many U.S. seniors to delay retirement. Economists and demographers recently have begun expecting a "huge exodus from the work force" as the first baby boomers reached age 60 in 2006. However, investment advisers and retirement planners at numerous financial firms are "seeing large numbers of older workers put off retirement as the housing and stock market troubles have deepened," the *Journal* reports. According to the *Journal*, the percentage of U.S. residents ages 55 to 64 in the work force rose from 63.3 percent in April 2007 to 64.8 percent in February 2008, an increase of more than one million workers. In addition, over the same time period, the share of those ages 65 and older rose now working to 16.2 percent from 16.0 percent, an increase of more than 212,000 workers.

The *Journal* reports a "big motivation for older

workers" to remain in their jobs is "scarce health benefits for retirees." According to an annual [survey](#) by the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) and the [Health Research and Educational Trust](#), the share of large companies offering retiree health benefits decreased by half, to 33 percent, from 1988 to 2007. According to the *Journal*, there is a "potential upside" to seniors staying in the work force longer. People who work longer and earn more could ease the financial burden on entitlement programs, including Medicare. In addition, the trend also could be "good news" for "knowledge-based industries," including health care, which are expected to undergo a loss of experienced workers, according to William Frey, a demographer at the [Brookings Institution](#) (Levitz, *Wall Street Journal*, 4/1).

Source: Kaiser Daily Health Policy Report, April 1, 2008

FDA approves rotavirus vaccine

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved a new vaccine to prevent rotavirus, which causes vomiting and diarrhea in infants and children.

The drug Rotarix is the second oral vaccine against the rotavirus licensed in the United States, the agency said Thursday in a release. Rotarix, manufactured by GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals, is given in a two-dose series to infants from 6 to 24 weeks of age.

Rotavirus causes about 2.7 million cases of gastroenteritis in the United States each year, with as many as 70,000 of those cases requiring

hospitalization and between 20 and 60 deaths attributed to the virus. The FDA said that without vaccination, nearly every child in the United States would likely be infected at least once with rotavirus by age 5.

In 1999, a different rotavirus vaccine was voluntarily withdrawn from the U.S. market because of an association with an increased risk of intussusception, the agency said.

Source: United Press International
Publication date: 2008-04-04

How to find the latest drug product and safety information

Resources are available for keeping up with the latest drug safety information from FDA.

There are many different types of communications that inform the public about the safe use of medicines. So how can you find information about a drug you are taking, whether it's a new warning, an early communication about an ongoing safety review or other FDA actions?

Click on the [Find the Latest Drug Product and Safety Information](#), where many resources are listed to keep citizens informed about the safe use of medicines.

Source: [Find the Latest Drug Product and Safety Information](#),
Fri, 11 Apr 2008 10:18:00 -0500

Go green—Epocrates employee tips

Let's REDUCE, REUSE and RECYCLE!

In honor of Earth Day on April 22, here are 10 easy ways that you can be greener at work every day:

1. **Save the trees.** Only print when you really need to print. If you must print, print double-sided (duplex). It only takes a few extra seconds and you can stretch your legs walking to the printer. Plus, re-use office supplies such as file folders, and drop used paper into the recycling slots at each printer station or into the shredding containers (shredded paper is also 100 percent recycled).



2. **Cut down on cups.** Let's reduce the number of cups, plates and dishes we use by bringing in our own reusable ones from home. Won't it cheer you up drinking coffee from your favorite mug? Plus, your Epocrates water bottle is great for keeping you hydrated throughout the day and looks cool too.

3. **Can the cans.** After you've enjoyed your soda, be sure to drop your empty can into the designated recycling bins.

4. **Cultivate your green fingers.** Keep a plant on your desk for oxygen, noise reduction, privacy and pleasure. (Don't forget to place it in a watertight container before watering.)

5. **Bike, bus or walk to work.** It's a really pleasant five-minute stroll from the local Caltrain station—what a great way to build exercise into your daily routine.

6. **Save energy.** Turn off your desk lights when you leave the office, and power down your computer at night. As well as conserving energy and reducing energy bills, it will help your PC run optimally. And it only takes two extra minutes in the morning, perfect time to fill your coffee mug and water bottle.

7. **Dispense with paper payslips.** Use an online payslip system and switch off your paper payslips. All that matters is that you get paid, right?

8. **Take the stairs.** Each minute of climbing stairs burns about 10 calories. If you haven't yet figured out where the stairs are located, take a break and explore.

9. **Watch what (and how) you eat** Use a reusable lunch bag, recycle plastic and paper grocery bags, avoid picking up stacks of paper napkins and consider earth-friendly lunch and coffee choices.

10. **Be vocal.** Encourage your colleagues to be green too.

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Click here for [computer energy-saving tips](#).

Salmonella illnesses may be linked to recalled cereal

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has announced that at least 23 people in 14 states have been diagnosed with salmonellosis that was caused by the same strain of *Salmonella* found in the recently recalled unsweetened Puffed Rice and unsweetened Puffed Wheat Cereals produced by Malt-O-Meal. Salmonellosis is an infection caused by *Salmonella* bacteria.

The recalled products were distributed nationally under the Malt-O-Meal brand name, as well as under

private label brands including Acme, America's Choice, Food Club, Giant, Hannaford, Jewel, Laura Lynn, Pathmark, Shaw's, ShopRite, Tops and Weis Quality.

The cereals have "Best If Used By" dates from April 8, 2008 (coded as "APR0808") through March 18, 2009 (coded as "MAR1809"). Grocery stores and other retailers should promptly remove the recalled cereals from their shelves.

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About salmonella

Salmonella is a type of bacteria that can cause serious and sometimes fatal infections in young children, frail or elderly people and others with weakened immune systems.

Symptoms of foodborne *Salmonella* infection include nausea, vomiting, fever, diarrhea and abdominal cramps.

Steps for consumers

Consumers should throw out any product in their homes from these recalled lots.

Individuals who believe they may have experienced an illness consistent with the symptoms described above after consuming a Puffed Wheat or Puffed Rice Cereal made by Malt-O-Meal should contact their health care professional immediately and report the illness to their state or local health authorities.

Medicare Part D 2008 data spotlight: 10 most common brand-name drugs

The April 2008 Part D Data Spotlight focused on coverage and utilization management of the 10 brand-name drugs most commonly used by Medicare beneficiaries. The top 10 brand-name drugs ranked by number of prescriptions filled in PACE, 2007 are:



NAME	TYPE OF DRUG	MEDIAN NEGOTIATED MONTHLY PRICE
Lipitor	Cholesterol	\$ 79.12
Plavix	Cardiovascular	125.91
Protonix	PPI*	117.67
Nexium	PPI	145.09
Fosamax	Osteoporosis	79.15
Diovan	Cardiovascular	57.54
Aricept	Dementia	158.49
Zetia	Cholesterol	87.06
Actonel	Osteoporosis	83.60
Prevacid	PPI	146.41

*Proton pump inhibitors

Four of the top 10 brands—Actonel, Aricept, Plavix and Zetia—are listed on all 47 national PDP formularies. Fosamax and Diovan are listed by all but one plan, and Lipitor is listed by all but four plans. The three PPIs (particularly Prevacid and Protonix) are the least likely to be included in national plan formularies.

Since the initial review of PDP formulary coverage of the top 10 brand-name drugs in 2006, four of the 10 drugs have gone off patent: Norvasc, Toprol XL, Zocor and Zoloft.

Over half of the most commonly used top 10 brands are expected to go off patent in the next few years: Fosamax and Protonix in 2008, Prevacid in 2009, Aricept in 2010 and Lipitor and Plavix in 2011. This will create a widespread opportunity for savings for both beneficiaries and the Medicare program, as part D plans use their formularies and other utilization management tools to steer beneficiaries to lower-cost generics.